

The University of Maine DigitalCommons@UMaine

Honors College

5-2012

‘Skins’: A Contemporary Moral Panic

Jenna L. Hoops

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/honors>



Part of the [Mass Communication Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hoops, Jenna L., "‘Skins’: A Contemporary Moral Panic" (2012). *Honors College*. 54.
<https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/honors/54>

This Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors College by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.

‘SKINS’: A CONTEMPORARY MORAL PANIC

by

Jenna L. Hoops

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for a Degree with Honors
(Mass Communication)

The Honors College

University of Maine

May 2012

Advisory Committee:

Eric E. Peterson, Professor of Communication and Journalism, Advisor
Kristin M. Langellier, Professor of Communication and Journalism
Henry A. Garfield, Adjunct Professor of English
Justin D. Martin, Honors Preceptor of Journalism
John C. Sherblom, Professor of Communication and Journalism

ABSTRACT

A moral panic is public opposition -- often highly emotional and morally charged -- to popular culture content distributed using a new form of mass communication. My thesis will be an analysis of commentary about the television show, *Skins*, which aired in 2011 on MTV. Opposition to the show focused on its portrayals of drug use, sexuality, and immoral behavior by actors under the age of 18. First, I will research the history of moral panics drawing on mass communication scholarship in order to identify the common aspects of media panics. Second, I will analyze commentary on the show *Skins* to determine the extent to which it incorporates the aspects of a moral panic. I will limit my analysis to commentary taken from major newspapers and web-based news sources during 2011. By way of conclusion, I will discuss the implications of this analysis for mass communication scholarship.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: MEDIA AND MORAL PANIC.....	1
Definition	1
Seven Key Features	1
Research Question	8
CHAPTER 2: APPROACH TO MEDIA ANALYSIS	9
MTV's <i>Skins</i>	9
Method of Analysis	10
CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS OF <i>SKINS</i> CONTROVERSY.....	11
Key Features Analysis	11
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION.....	24
Summary of Key Features	24
Summary of Analysis	26
Importance of Research	28
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	31
APPENDICES.....	33
AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY.....	75

CHAPTER 1: MEDIA AND MORAL PANIC

Definition

A moral panic is the term for an issue that is exploited by the media and moral authorities in society due to its controversial nature. A media panic occurs when, “A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right thinking people” (Cohen, 1973). When the moral structure of society is seen as threatened, there are many steps that happen that turn the controversy into a media panic. There are five key features of a media panic, as described by Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) in addition to two characteristics of a moral panic as described by Stanley Cohen (1973).

Seven Key Features

The first key feature is concern. This feature refers to the initial events that cause concern or spark anxiety and fear among members of the public due to the way the behavior challenges what is seen as the norm. When a group’s behavior threatens the moral code and defies social rules, concern can cause a moral panic to arise if moral authority and those who shape public opinion take an interest in stopping this behavior.

An example of concern in the history of moral panics can be seen in the reaction to fighting and rock throwing that took place on Easter Sunday in Clacton, England in 1964. A group of youths took to the streets instigating a small riot; news media publicized the incident, which led the public to be concerned about the group of youths (Cohen, 1973). That initial incident that sparked public and media concern began a

media-driven moral panic against the mods and rockers of England (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994).

The next key feature, hostility, is referring to the two sides of the controversy. The folk devils are the main players in the deviant behavior, and the moral guardians are the people or public groups speaking out against the behavior (1994). The hostility arises between the two groups because of the moral guardians' opposition to the immoral behavior of the folk devils; good versus bad. In the example of the mods and rockers from 1960's England, the youth partaking in the punk culture played the folk devils responsible for deviant behavior that threatened moral authority in society. The police, news media, and politicians that spoke out against them played the role of the moral guardians. These two roles make up the hostility characteristic of a moral panic.

The third key characteristic in a moral panic is consensus. There has to be some sort of agreement among members of society in opposition to the group or groups participating in the deviant behavior. There also needs to be a consensus that the threat to society posed by the folk devil is significant and requires taking action against. While consensus is essential in moral panics, the amount of agreement by moral authorities varies throughout history. The more agreement there is, especially from public figures such as police and politicians, the larger the moral panic will be and consequently there will be more public support of stopping the deviant behavior. For example, there was a consensus of a perceived threat by the police, politicians and news media in England towards the mods and rockers which gave the moral guardians strength in stopping the behavior. The public as a whole regards those that hold positions of authority, such as police, people in the clergy and politicians, as reliable sources for information as well as

guidance (Cohen, 1973). In the situation of the mods and rockers in England, the news media sensationalized the small riot, which created fear in the public and a call for action to control the group of youths. The authorities taking action against the mods and rockers legitimized the public's concern, allowing the issue to grow.

The fourth key feature in a moral panic is the panic itself. After the issue and the key players are identified, there is an exaggeration of the issue and the threat it poses to society, known as disproportionality. The perceived threat is much greater than the actual threat. Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994, p. 158) described disproportionality as a case where "objective molehills have been made into subjective mountains." However, the amount of disproportionality regarding an issue is subjective based upon who is examining the issue and their opinion of the behavior in question (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994).

"Moral Panics" by Kenneth Thompson (1990, p. 28) states that, "the mass media goes some way towards accounting for the new wave of perceived social problems, and this offered fertile ground for claims-makers—those who wished to make a claim on public opinion and public authorities for attention and resources." Thompson claims that mass media play a major role in moral panics by being the outlet for groups, such as the Parental Television Council in the *Skins* controversy, who publically announce their opinion in order to gain awareness. The growth of mass media gives those in the role of moral guardians an easy outlet for their story to be talked about and sensationalized. Media organizations need a continuous source of news stories. Moral panics provide one such source. There is an interrelated relationship between media practices and controversies becoming moral panics.

The disproportionality factor in the mods and rockers moral panic was evident in the initial reaction to the small disturbance in Clacton, England that led to massive news coverage and the public formation of the folk devil and moral guardians in the situation. While there was an incident in Clacton, the sensationalized story that was reported by the news media led to widespread public concern and an inflated version of the actual situation (Cohen, 1973). Without the disproportionality factor a situation cannot rise to the level of moral panic, for the perceived threat and the actual threat must be different.

The fifth and final key factor in a media panic, as defined by Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994), is the mass communication portrayal and reporting of the panic and the length and depth to which it is reported on, known as the volatility. Media coverage is the primary way in which a controversial issue becomes a public issue in society. The volatility of the issue describes how the problem erupts suddenly and then it subsides quickly too. Moral panics happen fast and while they may go away for some time, it is likely that they will reappear again in the future.

However, the volatile characteristic of moral panics does not mean that there are never long-lasting cultural or legal consequences from the issue. For example, the mods and rockers in England met with major opposition after the Clacton incident within just 24 hours. Media organizations moved to promote the issue and bring more people on board to speak out against it; however, even with that large of a reaction to the issue, it did not last over the years. While not much had changed due to the specific moral panic, the fascination with the mods and rockers deviant behavior dissipated (Cohen, 1973).

Cohen (1973) added two more elements of a moral panic to Goode and Ben-Yehuda's five characteristics that he felt were particularly important. The first concerns

the moral dimension of the social reaction. This dimension refers to the depth to which people are affected by the controversy and how it affects the way in which they view themselves. In other words, how deeply affected are people by the deviant behavior. When something challenges the morals of society, such as the mods and rockers in England, there is a perceived threat that suggests that if nothing is done to stop the current behavior, then all youth will follow in these footsteps. The social dimension of this reaction is based on the public looking inward at themselves and their lives and realizing they do not want their society to become a group of deviants who disregard moral and legal authority (Cohen, 1973).

The second component of a media panic that Cohen (1973) saw as inherently important was the idea that the deviant conduct in question is somehow symptomatic, that is, the reaction to the controversy is linked to other controversies or issues beyond the current problem. Cohen added this component because he believed that the reactions of the social guardians to certain controversial issues are based on past problems and a major factor in the social anxiety of the current issue is based upon the past.

In the situation of the mods and rockers, while the original act in Clacton, England sparked the media attention to the group it was not just because of that incident that there was a moral panic surrounding it. The reactions of the social guardians such as the public and police were based on their notion that one bad act would lead to another and something needed to be done to stop the behavior before it got out of control. This thought process is based upon past incidents that possibly got out of hand or the fear of losing control of a society. The strong and instant reaction is what Cohen (1973) means when he says that the deviant behavior is somehow symptomatic.

Another major component in a moral panic is the person or group of persons that is put in the role of the folk devil. Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994, p. 156) in "Moral Panics: Culture, Politics and Social Construction" say that, "In response to the exaggerated concern, "folk devils," are created, deviant stereotypes identifying the enemy, the source of the threat, selfish, evil wrongdoers who are responsible for the trouble." The role of the folk devil is important in a moral panic for it is the driving force behind the issue. The main person or group of persons responsible for exaggerating the issue and bringing it to the public's attention use fears about the folk devil in order to gain a following in their opposition to the situation.

The moral guardian is commonly a group or person that holds some authority or moral authority in society and has the means to bring an issue to light through mass communication and other authoritative people and/or groups. In agreement with Cohen's research, Bryan E. Denham (2008, p. 946) in, "Folk Devils, News Icons and the Construction of Moral Panics," quotes Jock Young (1977) when explaining the importance of the folk devil and the moral guardian roles in a moral panic. The two roles are the primary forces, "In describing the process that occurs when powerful groups target the purported deviance of smaller ones. By amplifying, or drawing broader attention to deviant behaviors, groups with power re-affirm accepted moral boundaries." The moral guardian in the moral panic situation is the one who is responsible for the perceived issues' growth and the amplification of it in the public sphere. It is the moral guardian who is the primary source that brings the issue enough attention to embody all of the components of a moral panic as stated by Cohen, Ben-Yehuda and Goode.

Actions that can be classified as deviant behavior within a moral panic are the behaviors or ideas that challenge or are in direct opposition to hegemonic values and moral codes currently in place within that society. Commonly, deviant behavior challenges the conservative perspective and it is conservative groups that act as the moral authority in the situation. However, media representatives, police and other public officials who have no political bias or traditional stance on the issue can support opposition to a group's behavior or ideas. As long as an authoritative figure can be viewed as leading the opposition against the folk devil then news accounts and public concerns will commonly follow.

The final major component of a moral panic is the aftermath and what is affected due to the moral guardian's actions against the deviant behavior in question. "Media, Morality, and Madness: The Case against Sleaze TV," by Jo Taverer (2000, p. 68), states, "Moral panics are ideological frameworks that proscribe the meaning and moral significance of concrete events and behaviors." This statement provides a simple way to look at moral panics and how the ideological framework surrounding the moral panic provides a basis of change in order to preserve the hegemonic values that the behavior challenged and the moral code that it threatened.

Ben-Yehuda and Goode (1994, p. 169) refer to the inevitable aftermath effects of the moral panic when they state that, "Moral panics are not like fads, trivial in nature and inconsequential in their impact. Even those panics that seem to end without institutional impact often leave normative or informal traces that prepares us for later or panics or other events." When an issue has gained the interest of so many public figures and media

representatives, there has to be some sort of conclusion that eases the anxieties felt by the people after becoming aware of the situation.

Research Question

To what extent can the show *Skins*, and the controversy that surrounded it, be considered a moral panic based on the required seven key features stated by Stanley Cohen, Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda?

CHAPTER 2: AN APPROACH TO MEDIA ANALYSIS

MTV's *Skins*

Skins is a television show that premiered on MTV on January 17th, 2011 and aired its tenth and final episode on March 21st, 2011. The show was based on the British television show of the same name that aired throughout 2007. The show claimed to be an inside look at the lives of average teenagers as they struggled with substance abuse, emotional issues, and sexuality. This mix of topics led the Parental Television Council (PTC) to strongly oppose the show before it had even aired in January of 2011.

A brief plot summary of the show, as posted by MTV on their website, is that the show centers on the lives of seven teenagers as they deal with sexuality, drugs, friends and fights. MTV states, "Be it sex, drugs, the breadth of friendships or the depth of heartbreaks, *Skins* is an emotional mosh-pit that slams through the insanity of teenage years" (*About skins*, 2011). The show, while casting teenage actors and portraying the lives of teenagers, was rated TV-MA; this rating means the content is unsuitable for audience members under the age of seventeen. This rating caught the attention of many people and activists groups, such as the Parental Television Council, that would publically oppose the show's controversial content.

Although the American version of *Skins* aired in January of 2011, the show itself is based upon a British television show of the same name. While they share the same name and basic plot, the two shows shared different fates. The British *Skins* followed a group of teenagers as they grew up and dealt with many controversial issues; however, this version of the show was a favorite with fans and critics alike and went on to win a British Academy of Film and Television Arts award. The British show had five

successful seasons and the creators are currently working on a film adaptation of the show to be released in 2012. The U.S. version of *Skins* was only aired for one season and was cancelled after that due to poor ratings and backlash from advertisers.

Method of Analysis

The method of analysis that will be used in the examination, discussion and conclusion part of this paper is a categorization of the reaction to *Skins* using the five key factors stated by Ben-Yehuda and Goode as well as the additional two stated by Stanley Cohen. I compare and evaluate whether or not the reaction to, and opposition of, the show *Skins* can be considered a contemporary moral panic. I examine publicity and news accounts about the show before it premiered, during its one and only season and after its last episode.

I examine material published by the *New York Times*, ABC News, MSNBC, *New York Daily News*, and Salon.com. In addition to the articles published by major news sources, I examine the Parental Television Council's press releases and public statements regarding the show *Skins* and its controversial content. I selected these media sources for the analysis based upon their reputation, popularity, role in the *Skins* controversy, and differing takes on the issue. Using various media outlets in this analysis will add an element of diversity to the commentary being analyzed. All documents used and/or referenced will be included in the appendices.

CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS OF ‘SKINS’ CONTROVERSY

This chapter analyzes the controversy surrounding the MTV/Viacom television series *Skins* which aired for one season from January 2011 to March 2011. As previously stated, this analysis is constructed by categorizing the commentary regarding the *Skins* controversy according to the key features of a moral panic- concern, hostility, consensus, disproportionality, volatility, the moral dimension of the social reaction, and the need for the deviant behavior to be symptomatic.

Key Feature Analysis

Concern

The controversy surrounding the *Skins* premiere and season began when, shortly prior to the airing of the premiere, the Parental Television Council added the MTV/Viacom show to their website and gave it their rating of appropriateness as a red light which means the show may include gratuitous sex, explicit dialogue, violent content, or obscene language, and is unsuitable for children. It is in these first weeks that the concern characteristic is evident. The concern feature refers to the initial event that causes concern or sparks anxiety among members of the public. This concern regards what is seen as deviant behavior that challenges or threatens the hegemonic values in society.

The PTC's website gave their overview of the show in which they stated several of the many episodes in which the show's content was extreme or immoral according to them. They stated on their website that,

Depictions of sex, violence and drug use among teenagers are graphic and extreme. In the current season's first episode, Effy challenges Cook, Freddie and

JJ to break all of the school rules in one day. Cook smokes marijuana, drinks vodka, sets fire to his locker and exposes his genitalia to the school assembly.

(see Appendix B)

This quote shows not only the content of the show but the way in which the Parental Television Council views it. There is major concern that the behavior on the show is “too graphic and extreme” for a young audience or for young actors to be portraying. The PTC demands that the content be toned down before it threatens the dominant values in society.

Almost immediately, the PTC began to take public action in opposition to the show *Skins*. Less than a week after the show’s January 17th, 2011 premier, the Parental Television Council sent a letter to the Department of Justice and U.S. House and Senate Judiciary Committees stating that the PTC had found forty-two depictions and references to drugs and alcohol in the series premiere being dealt with by actors as young as fifteen.

The PTC announced publically in a press release on January 20th, 2011 that they had indeed sent this letter because they believed that the show *Skins* was breaking existing federal child pornography laws. This initial charge of child pornography quickly caught the attention of news organizations, the producers of the show *Skins*, and members of the public (see Appendix C).

In the issue section of the PTC’s website, which contains reviews on new movies and shows, the PTC state that one of their major concerns regarding the show *Skins* is its influence on viewers. They note that MTV has publically stated that the network has the ability to influence youth culture and that their viewers, primarily ages 15-17, are “Excited consumers and extremely impressionable and now is the time to influence their

choices (see Appendix B).” The Parental Television Council use this claim by MTV/Viacom regarding how impressionable they believe their audiences to be in order to justify the seriousness of their charge. The PTC use this claim to suggest that MTV is culpable if members of their audience emulate or are influenced by the behavior they see depicted on *Skins*. It is this claim of influence that the Parental Television Council regards as concerning and/or threatening about the television series *Skins*.

Hostility

Hostility is the feature of a moral panic that refers to the different sides of public opinion: the folk devils participating in the deviant behavior are juxtaposed with the moral guardians who attempt to stop the deviant behavior. In this instance, the Parental Television Council takes on the role of the moral guardian while MTV/Viacom takes on the role of the folk devil. The creation of these two sides is marked by the PTC’s public opposition to the show and the producers/creators at MTV/Viacom defense of it. Furthermore, news accounts of the controversy position these organizations in opposition, with the sides of the issue being those that support the Parental Television Council’s campaign against *Skins* opposed to those who support MTV/Viacom and the continuation of *Skins*.

The first instance of hostility in the *Skins* controversy is on January 20th, 2011 when the Parental Television Council, in an official press release, calls on the chairmen of the U.S. Senate and House Judiciary Committees and the Department of Justice to open an investigation regarding child pornography and exploitation on MTV’s *Skins*. The PTC calls for public legal action against the deviant behavior on the show *Skins* and against MTV and Viacom for producing such material in addition to their request for a

federal investigation into the show. The two sides of the issue grow as different mass communication outlets get involved and begin to further publicize the controversy.

Within a week of *The New York Times*' article about *Skins* being published, ABC News (see Appendix M), MSNBC News (see Appendix K) and *New York Daily News* (see Appendix N) had all published articles about regarding the show. The articles often mentioned or quoted *The New York Times* article (see Appendix J).

Consensus

Consensus in a moral panic is the presence of an agreed upon opinion among those involved in the controversy. This means that the amount of people in opposition to the deviant behavior grows. In this case, increasing numbers of the public come to agree with the moral guardian, the Parental Television Council. The evidence for this consensus is seen in the sudden withdrawal of multiple companies that were advertising throughout the airing of *Skins* episodes.

The movement toward consensus within the *Skins* controversy takes place when the Parental Television Council announces a "take action alert" that asks members of their audience to contact Taco Bell and ask them to pull their advertisements from airing during *Skins*. The success of this effort is taken as a move toward consensus exemplified when Taco Bell decided to pull the advertisements from airing during the MTV show. Taco Bell spokesperson Rob Poetsh told a reporter for MSNBC, "We advertise on a variety of MTV programs that reach our core demographic of 10 to 34 year olds, which included the premiere episode of *Skins*." Poetsh went on in the article to say that Taco Bell had come to the decision that the show (*Skins*) was not a fit for their brand" (*Racy MTV Show*, 2012).

Further consensus is sought in a January 21, 2011 Parental Television Council press release that quotes the PTC president, Tim Winter, who states that, “Every single advertiser who sponsored the premier episode of *Skins* is not only endorsing, but glorifying teen drug and alcohol abuse, not to mention a plethora of baseless sexual content” (see Appendix D). The press release went on to call out the remaining companies that were still advertising during the show; the companies listed in the press release were Schick Hydro, H&R Block, L’Oreal, Subway, Foot Locker, Orbit chewing gum and Extra chewing gum. The public call for action is the primary tactic employed by the Parental Television Council to get *Skins* cancelled. The PTC used this tactic to create the perception of public consensus regarding *Skins*. This negative publicity would put pressure on MTV by reducing the attractiveness of the show for advertisers. PTC ended this press release by saying that they, “Hope these advertisers will agree that the content in *Skins* is harmful to their corporate image (see Appendix D).”

The Parental Television Council positions itself as the moral guardian in the situation, as well as a moral authority for society. Drawing public attention to the deviant behavior on *Skins* is a way to mobilize support in putting pressure on advertisers. As the PTC requested that advertisers pull their support from the show and they encouraged members of the public to contact the companies as a way of legitimizing their claims. The growth of consensus is evident because over the course of the season Yum! Brands, Mars, Inc (Wrigley), General Motors, Doctor’s Associates (Subway), Foot Locker, H&R Block, Schick, Guthy-Renkey (Pro-Activ), L’Oreal, Reckit Benckiser (Clearasil) and Kraft all pulled their advertisements the show (see Appendix D).

In addition to pulling their advertisements, some companies released statements explaining their reasons. H&R Block released a statement following their decision in which they stated, “H&R Block is not an advertiser of the show. One ad ran by mistake as part of a rotation. Once we learned this, we immediately took steps to ensure it didn’t happen again” (Roberts, 2011). This example shows that while brands were removing their advertisements from the show at the request of the Parental Television Council, some were making sure to state the degree of their association with *Skins* as H&R Block did. However, this was not consistently the case with the companies that withdrew their advertisements. The first company to pull its advertisements, Taco Bell, released a statement cited in a Hollywoodreporter.com article that the content of the *Skins* was not aligned with the image of their brands (see Appendix O).

Disproportionality

Disproportionality within a moral panic refers to the exaggeration of the issue and threat that the moral guardians believe the deviant behavior poses to society. The disproportionality within the *Skins* controversy is evident in the early actions of the Parental Television Council. The PTC expressed concern for how watching a show with immoral content could affect the young viewers of the show in their review of it on the PTC website (see Appendix B). This concern is based upon the PTC’s *perceived threat* although there had been no instances of a viewer’s behavior being directly influenced after watching an episode of *Skins*.

The disproportionality of the issue with *Skins* is also evident in that the Parental Television Council released statements referring to H&R Block pulling their advertisements from airing during *Skins* when in fact the H&R Block advertisements

were being run on a rotation and it was unintentional to have them air during the show. This meant that the company pulling their advertisements was not completely because of the controversy surrounding *Skins*. The representative for H&R Block stated, “H&R Block is not an advertiser of the show. One advertisement ran by mistake as part of a rotation,” (Roberts, 2011). This evidence shows a byproduct of the PTC’s disproportionality of the threat they perceived by *Skins*. There is usually a sense of disproportionality when the moral authority is reporting about the controversy as seen by the PTC’s portrayal of the withdrawal of advertisements from multiple companies as a direct example of the companies’ disapproval of *Skins*. The misleading statements by the Parental Television Council are a primary example of the disproportionality that exists within the *Skins* controversy.

Since the Parental Television Council has an agenda, it is understandable that they would exaggerate the threat that *Skins* poses. However, supposedly “neutral” sources of news also contribute to the disproportionality in the moral panic over *Skins*. An example of the news sources role in the disproportionality of the *Skins* controversy is the way they present the issue in the headlines of their articles about it. MSNBC released an article titled, “Racy MTV Show ‘Skins’ is losing an Advertiser” (see Appendix K). This sets the audience up with an initial impression that the show *Skins* is in fact racy and that because of the shows’ content the advertisers are pulling out. An additional headline example is *The New York Times* (Stelter, 2011) article on this controversy titled, “A Racy Show With Teenagers Steps Back From a Boundary” (see Appendix J). Once again, the news outlet is setting up the audience with a position primarily aligned with that of the Parental Television Council.

Thus, the Parental Television Council's framing of the issue in their press releases and the different news sources that cite their framing are evidence of the disproportionality within the *Skins* controversy. In addition to being evidence of disproportionality, these examples also show that there are multiple factors that facilitate the existence of this feature.

Volatility

The disproportional emphasis in news media leads into the next key feature of a moral panic, which is volatility. Volatility concerns the nature of how media organizations portray and report on the panic as well as the length and depth to which it is reported on. Understandably, the kind of attention an issue or controversy is paid depends on multiple factors. If a prominent public figure or group is leading the moral authority in a panic, then there is a greater chance of attention to it in news accounts. The more legitimate the news source, the more credible the controversy and consequently the more public awareness of the issue.

In the *Skins* controversy, the Parental Television Council uses press releases and letters asking for boycotts, advertisement removal, and legislative support in their campaign against the television show. As larger newspapers and news corporations began to cover the controversy they create an increasingly volatile situation for advertisers. This volatile situation was the consistent increase of public support for the Parental Television Council and the actions of the PTC's supporters in contacting the different companies.

There is a major increase in volatility when *The New York Times* released their article titled, "A Racy Show with Teenagers Steps Back From a Boundary," on January 19, 2011, only two days after the show's January 17th premiere (Stelter, 2011). The article

escalated the controversy due to the reputation of *The New York Times* as a national newspaper of record. The article describes the concerns raised by the Parental Television Council and examines the legislative call for efforts to investigate *Skins* for breaking child pornography laws (see Appendix J).

The New York Times article states: “With ads that feature groups of barely clothed teenagers, *Skins* is surely one of the most sexually charged programs that MTV has featured” (Stelter, 2011). In the next paragraph the reporter claims that it could be those sexual and drug charged scenes that attract younger viewers in the first place. While this assumption may be correct, it takes a position that contradicts MTV/Viacom’s defense that the show was for mature audiences. In this article the reporter accepts the framing of the issue by the Parental Television Council. This acceptance by the reporter, and the publication of this article by *The New York Times*, confirms the PTC concern about the issue.

The growth of news coverage demonstrates the volatility of the controversy and is the driving force challenging social reaction to the potential threat. The Parental Television Council has a strong audience of supporters, but without the coverage of the issue by different news organizations the issue would not have had the impact as illustrated by the lack of action on other shows that the PTC opposes.

Once *The New York Times* published the story, which included statements from both the PTC and MTV/Viacom, there were articles published on the Internet by news sources such as ABC News (see Appendix M), MSNBC (see Appendix K), *The New York Daily News* (see Appendix N), and Salon.com (see Appendix L). These articles summarized the controversy and facilitated its escalation in the public forum. With well-

known news sources such as those mentioned covering the issue, other news outlets such as Deadline.Com (see Appendix P) and Hollywoodreporter.com (See Appendix O) re-posted their articles. The upward flux of news coverage over the *Skins* controversy led to a hasty increase in the volatility of the issue and, consequently, a major boost in public awareness of the debate between the Parental Television Council and MTV/Viacom over the appropriateness of the show's content.

The increased news coverage contributed to the concern and volatility features of the *Skins* moral panic. It brought the issue to the public's attention and highlighted the perceived threat of the issue. The news coverage also affected the hostility of the issue, confirming it as something that required action- either in support for the Parental Television Council or for MTV/Viacom. That is, those who supported the PTC's stance on the issue were seeing an increased support for the PTC in news accounts, and those who supported MTV and Viacom's stance were seeing an increase in public opposition to the side they support. The growth in consensus, volatility, and disproportionality, all being documented through the news outlet's framework of the issue, intensified the importance of having members of the public take similar positions on the issue. Although the key features of a moral panic are laid out in this analysis separately, it is clear how interconnected they are.

While news organizations published similar articles repeating the main topics of the issue and replicating *The New York Times* article, other news organizations took a deeper look at the problem behind the controversy. Five days after the *New York Times* article, award winning news and entertainment website Salon.com posted an article by writer Chris MacDonald (2011) titled, "MTV's *Skins*: The Ethics of Profiting from Teen

Sexuality.” Macdonald questioned not the content of the show but the ethics that go in to producing sexually charged teenage content, particularly if it could potentially cross legal child pornography lines (see Appendix L). **News** coverage, such as that from Salon.com, provided another example of the importance of the volatility characteristic in a moral panic; it calls on readers to consider and question the controversy and possibly think about it in a different way than they had been previously led to by the framework of other news sources articles.

Stanley Cohen’s additional two key features of a moral panic are essential in an analysis of a controversy when making a conclusion on whether the situation can be considered a moral panic or not. The more characteristics a controversy has and the how in depth it follows the criteria show how much of an impact it had on society while it was occurring and afterwards.

Moral Dimension of the Social Reaction

Cohen’s first feature is the moral dimension of the social reaction. What Cohen refers to in this feature is the depth to which people are affected by the controversy and how it affects the way in which they view themselves. While evaluating the way a controversy affects individuals in the public sphere is difficult, it is clear how a controversy affects individual companies and public groups in society.

The Parental Television Council’s threat of a boycott and public call for action caught the attention of the companies that were advertising during commercial breaks of *Skins*. Ten of the companies that were advertising- Yum! Brands, Mars, Inc (Wrigley), General Motors, Doctor’s Associates (Subway), Foot Locker, H&R Block, Schick, Guthy-Renkey (Pro-Activ), L’Oreal, Reckit Benckiser (Clearasil) and Kraft- pulled their

advertisements out following the PTC's requests to do so, and many of them cited the show's content as their primary reasoning for doing so. An example of this is the gum company Wrigley releasing a statement after pulling their advertisements that said, "Wrigley has decided to suspend any advertising during MTV's *Skins* as it was never our intent to endorse content that could offend our consumers" ("More Advertisers Flee," 2011). The different companies taking this action show a moral dimension to the social reaction for these companies felt that they were morally obligated to pull their sponsorship out of the show. There is clearly a moral dimension to the controversy for companies and individuals alike felt that the content on *Skins* was too racy or controversial to support.

Deviant Conduct Being Symptomatic

Cohen argues that having the deviant behavior in question within a moral panic must be symptomatic. This feature means that the controversial behavior is something that has been dealt with in the public forum before, in order for a controversy to be considered a moral panic. In regards to the *Skins* controversy, there are multiple examples of how controversies concerning the appropriateness of certain television shows' content have been brought to the public's attention before.

Evidence to support previous content-related issues is seen in the Parental Television Council's mission statement specifically states that their goal is to, "Discourage the increasingly graphic sexual themes and dialogue, depictions of gratuitous violence, and profane/obscene language that have crowded out family viewing options" (see Appendix A). The need for this in their mission statement is evidence that

since their creation in 1995 there has been a need for them based on television shows being present that go against their values.

In addition to the PTC's mission statement, *The New York Times* article published concerning the *Skins* controversy brought attention to MTV/Viacom's controversial past. The article was written after MTV/Viacom publically announced that some changes and consideration would be made to ensure that *Skins* was not breaking any federal child pornography laws. The article states, "the planned changes indicate that MTV, which has been pushing the envelope for decades, may be concerned that it pushed it too far this time" (Stelter, 2011). This public acknowledgement made by *The New York Times* regarding MTV's controversial past implied an extensive history in regards to MTV broadcasting controversial content on their shows, which consequently lead to the controversy when *Skins* aired.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

A media panic is a moral panic that consists of public opposition -- often highly emotional and morally charged -- to popular culture content distributed by media organizations. This paper analyzed the controversy surrounding MTV/Viacom's show *Skins* that premiered on January 17th, 2011 and aired for only one season. The Parental Television Council played a major role in leading public opposition against the show. Quickly after the PTC's public calls for boycotts, advertisers pulled their advertisements from playing during the show. Increased attention from well-known news outlets, such as *The New York Times*, in the United States resulted in public outcry over the racy, sexually charged episodes and calls for a federal investigation of breaking child pornography laws.

Summary of Key Features

According to Stanley Cohen, Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, a moral panic consists of seven key characteristics: concern, hostility, consensus, disproportionality, volatility, a moral dimension to the social reaction and having the deviant conduct in question be symptomatic in some way. When conducting this analysis, I explored whether or not the controversy over *Skins* can be considered a moral panic by examining evidence for the existence of each key feature.

The characteristic of concern refers to the initial event in the controversy that brought it to the attention and opposition of others. The event must spark anxiety or fear among members of the public based on the threat that it will threaten the hegemonic and normative codes in society. The hostility feature refers to the two sides of the controversy; there are the folk devils that are participating in or facilitating the deviant behavior and then there are the moral guardians who are opposing and attempting to stop

the deviant behavior. The next characteristic, consensus, comes after the two sides of the controversy have been established. The consensus is the growth of the different sides, as there becomes some sort of agreement among members of society regarding whether or not the deviant behavior in question does indeed threaten the moral code.

The disproportionality feature is the presence of exaggeration, particularly through mass communication, within the moral panic. After the issue and the key players are identified there is usually an exaggeration or sensationalization of the issue and the threat it poses to society by news and media outlets covering the issue. This analysis primarily used articles by the *New York Times*, ABC News, MSNBC News, Salon.com, and the *International Business Times* to track the media coverage of the *Skins* controversy. Another key characteristic of a moral panic is the volatility of the issue. The feature involves news outlet's portrayal and reporting of the panic as well as the length and depth of such coverage. How news organizations cover a controversy is a primary factor in whether an issue goes from a "controversy" to a "moral panic."

Stanley Cohen's research derived two more characteristics that he saw as essential to the formation of a moral panic. The first key feature Cohen added was the need for there to be some sort of a moral dimension to the social reaction. This addition means that the public must be affected by the knowledge of the controversy and ultimately this knowledge affects the way in which they view themselves or their lives. A controversy grows into a moral panic when the public becomes engaged in the issue and takes action to stop what is now understood to be deviant behavior. The second component of a moral panic as described by Cohen is that the deviant conduct in question is somehow symptomatic of cultural trends. Showing that the deviant behavior is symptomatic means

that there is evidence that the issue is larger than the present problem based on examples throughout history of similar deviant behavior being met with public opposition. These key features are essential in the make up of a moral panic as well as in this analysis.

The methodology used in this analysis was an analysis of the controversy surrounding the show *Skins*. The analysis was based upon Cohen, Goode, and Ben-Yehuda's characteristics of a moral panic.

Summary of Analysis

The analysis of news accounts surrounding *Skins* reveals a controversy that includes all of the key features of a moral panic. The *Skins* controversy demonstrates the seven key characteristics of concern, hostility, consensus, disproportionality, volatility, a moral dimension to the reaction, and the deviant behavior in question being symptomatic.

The analysis shows how the Parental Television Council quickly took on the role of moral guardian in the situation, which positioned MTV/Viacom as the folk devil for their production and support of *Skins*; the creation of these two roles illustrates an example of the hostility feature. When the Parental Television Council called for action by the public to pressure current companies to pull their advertisements from airing during *Skins* or face a boycott the key feature concern is evident. There was concern based upon the content of the *Skins* premiere episode that the program threatened the moral code of society based upon the views of the Parental Television Council.

Once advertisers began pulling their ads from airing during *Skins* the feature of consensus can be seen. The Parental Television Council gained support from the public as well as from different companies, which gives legitimacy to their perspective on the controversy become more widespread. As more companies complied with the PTC's

request, more attention was generated in media accounts. On January 19th, 2011, *The New York Times*, a highly regarded news outlet, published a story about the *Skins* controversy. Shortly after this article was published, news outlets such as ABC News, MSNBC News, and Salon.com reported on the controversy. The growth in attention from news outlets is evidence for the volatility feature in the *Skins* controversy.

The growth of media coverage surrounding the controversy also touches upon the disproportionality feature necessary in moral panics. The analysis shows that the coverage on the issue by news outlets framed the issue in a way that was closer to the Parental Television Council's position than it was to that of MTV/Viacom. The initial concern in the issue is based upon the PTC's *perceived threat* although there had been no instances of a person who watched *Skins* having their behavior directly influenced because of it. However, the framing of the media with headlines such as *The New York Times*, "A Racy Show With Teenagers Steps Back From a Boundary," or MSNBC's, "Racy MTV show *Skins* is losing an Advertiser." These headlines frame the controversy from the perspective of the Parental Television Council. The disproportion is the sensationalized and/or partisan headlines regarding the issue that news organizations release to the public. This disproportionality can lead the public to be influenced in how they view the issue based on how the news organizations present it.

The analysis done describes evidence of a moral dimension to the social reaction brought about in the *Skins* controversy. One example for the moral dimension of the publics' reaction to *Skins* can be seen in how promptly companies started to pull their advertisements from the show and how many of them stated that the content in *Skins* did not align with their company values. The companies wanted to protect their social and

moral public image and disconnect themselves from the moral controversy surrounding *Skins*.

The last key feature from the methodology that was used when doing this analysis of the *Skins* controversy provides evidence that the deviant conduct in question was somehow symptomatic. This is evident in the *Skins* controversy by the prior instances of public opposition to racy television shows. Between 1952 and 1953, the sitcom *I Love Lucy* faced a major controversy when members of the public thought that showing her pregnant on television was too racy (Davies & Smith, 1998). The presence of this feature in the *Skins* controversy is evident in the Parental Television Council's mission statement, which specifically states that their goal is to "Discourage the increasingly graphic sexual themes and dialogue, depictions of gratuitous violence, and profane/obscene language that have crowded out family viewing options" (see Appendix A). This formulation of their mission statement shows a history of what they claim to be "immoral content" in television shows since their 1995 creation.

This analysis demonstrates that the controversy that surrounded the MTV/Viacom show *Skins* after its January 2011 premier, meets the necessary criteria to be considered a moral panic. This conclusion is supported by the numerous instances within the *Skins* controversy that met each of the criteria for a moral panic as stated by Stanley Cohen, Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda.

Importance of Research

The importance of this research, analysis, and conclusion is that this specific controversy is not an isolated incident. Goode and Ben-Yehuda, driving forces behind moral panic research and analysis emphasized the importance of moral panics based on

their prevalence throughout history. “Not only are successive moral panics built on earlier ones, but even in quieter, nonpanic periods, the institutional legacy that moral panics leave attempts to regulate the behavior that is deemed harmful, unacceptable, criminal or deviant” (169). There have been numerous examples of moral panics because of inappropriate content and this research shows that while controversial behavior is becoming more acceptable on television, there is still the possibility of backlash if a producer goes too far.

In the *Skins* controversy, MTV/Viacom saw a controversy arise when they produced content that potentially broke federal child pornography laws. “Moral Panics: Culture, Politics, and Social Construction” by Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, states that while moral panics are largely based upon concern over consequences of the deviant behavior that have not yet occurred, there can be long lasting effects once a moral panic is over. Ben-Yehuda and Goode reference the moral panic over drugs that occurred in the early 1970’s under President Richard Nixon. The moral panic over drugs in the 1970’s, “hugely expanded the federal drug budget, placed the drug war on a firm institutional footing, and created several drug agencies empowered to deal with drug abuse in one way or another” (169). While the initial panic over drug use in America may seem over, the lasting consequences of the controversy are clearly seen in how legislation has changed in response to it.

The impact that a moral panic has on society can differ in depth. Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994, p. 169) found that, “Even seemingly inconsequential panics leave behind some sort of legacy; even those that produce no institutional, organizational, or formal legacy are likely to have had some impact in the informal or attitudinal realm.” Further

evidence of the legitimacy of the *Skins* moral panic, as well as the significance of this research, can be found in the aftermath of the shows only season and in decisions that MTV/Viacom made when writing and casting shows that they have since produced.

Although the *Skins* moral panic did not bring about direct legislative action, there is evidence that the panic surrounding the content on the show, particularly the questionable use of underage characters, had an impact on MTV and Viacom. This impact is evident in the way they created, cast and directed one of their 2012 shows *I Just Want My Pants Back*. The Parental Television council has once again targeted an MTV/Viacom show for their inclusion of racy content in a television show with young viewers. In regards to *I Just Want My Pants Back*, PTC President Tim Winter released a statement (“I Just Want My Pants,” 2012) saying, “Once again MTV is taking HBO-style content and marketing it to a Nickelodeon-age audience. The network-programming executive is on the record saying 12-year-olds are in his crosshairs. And the TV-14 content rating is intentionally misleading for parents and for advertisers. The Parents Television Council will not sit silently and allow this affront to go unchallenged” (see Appendix Q).

The lasting impact of the *Skins* controversy, however, is the fact that the actors used in MTV’s *I Just Want My Pants Back* are twenty-five years old and older. The underage status of *Skins* actors was what brought about the accusations of child pornography during the *Skins* controversy. The attention paid to the age of actors in shows produced since *Skins* is likely due to the moral panic that surrounded the show. In conclusion, the *Skins* controversy can be considered a contemporary moral panic based on its exemplification of the seven key features as found by my research and analysis.

LIST OF REFERENCES

- About skins*. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.mtv.com/shows/skins/series.jhtml>
- Cohen, S. (1973). Folk devils and moral panics: The creation of the mods and rockers. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 2(3), 380-81. doi: 10.1177/089124167300200308
- Davies, J., & Smith, C. (1998). Race, gender, and the American mother: political speech and the maternity episodes of I love lucy and murphy brown . *American Studies*, 39(2), 33-63. Retrieved from <https://journals.ku.edu/>
- Denham, B. (2008). Folk devils, news icons and the construction of moral panics. *Journalism Studies*, 9(6), 945-961. doi: 10.1080/14616700802227811
- Garland, D. (2008). On the concept of moral panic. *Crime, Media, Culture*, 4(9), 9-30. doi: 10.1177/1741659007087270
- Goode, E., & Ben-Yehuda, N. (1994). Moral panics: Culture, politics, and social construction. *Annual Sociology Review*, 20, 149-71.
- Hunt, A. (1997). 'moral panic' and moral language in the media. *British Journal of Sociology*, 48(4), 629-648. Retrieved from <http://www.taddei.eco.ufrj.br>
- MacDonald, C. (2011, January 24). *Mtv's "skins": The ethics of profiting from teen sexuality*. Retrieved from http://open.salon.com/blog/chris_macdonald/2011/01/24/mtvs_skins_the_ethics_of_profiting_from_teen_sexuality
- McRobbie, A., & Thornton, S. (1995). Rethinking 'moral panic' for multi-media social worlds. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 46(4), 559-574. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/591571>

- More advertisers flee controversial 'skins'.* (2011, September 23). Retrieved from <http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/41222184/ns/today-entertainment/>
- MTV's 'i just want my pants back' becomes new target for PTC.* (2012, February 14). Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/14/mtvs-i-just-want-my-pants-back-ptc_n_1275948.html
- PFlum, M., Kunin, S., & Vanallen, A. (2011, January 21). *Taco bell pulls ads from mtv's 'skins' amid call for congressional, justice inquiries.* Retrieved from <http://abcnews.go.com/m/story?id=12732425>
- Racy mtv show 'skins' is losing an advertiser.* (2012, January 21). Retrieved from http://news.mobile.msn.com/enus/article_ent.aspx?aid=41180454&afid=1
- Roberts, S. (2011, January 12). *Mtv's 'skins' is 'most dangerous' show ever for kids: parents television council.* Retrieved from http://articles.nydailynews.com/2011-01-13/entertainment/27087306_1_teen-girls-mtv-series-sexual-orientation
- Stelter, B. (2011, January 19). A racy show with teenagers steps back from a boundary. *New York Times.* Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/20/business/media/20mtv.html>
- Tavener, J. (2000). Media, morality, and madness: The case against sleaze tv. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 17(1), 63-85.
- Thompson, K. (1990). *Moral panics.* London, England: Routledge. Retrieved from http://supporto.nextmedia.it:2011/ProdottiNextmedia/Varie/Corsi_Nextmedia/KeyBooks/KIMoralPanics.pdf

APPENDIX A

PTC: Mission

What is the PTC's mission?

The PTC's primary mission is to promote and restore responsibility and decency to the entertainment industry in answer to America's demand for positive, family-oriented television programming. The PTC does this by fostering changes in TV programming to make the early hours of prime time family-friendly and suitable for viewers of all ages.

Because of the pervasive and powerful influence of television, the PTC seeks to discourage the increasingly graphic sexual themes and dialogue, depictions of gratuitous violence, and profane/obscene language that have crowded out family viewing options. The PTC concentrates on broadcast television, which uses the public airwaves to enter every home with a television set, and expanded basic cable, which millions of households rely on for their TV programming.

The PTC also assists parents in exercising responsibility for their children's viewing habits with the Family Guide to Prime Time Television. The Guide offers a traffic-light ratings system with red-, yellow-, and green-light ratings indicating the amount of sex, foul language and violence in each series. The ratings system is accompanied by clear descriptions of every prime time show, enabling parents to make educated decisions about the programs they and their families wish to view.

The PTC has customarily focused on broadcast television programs -- particularly during prime time, and especially during the "Family Hour" (the earliest hour of network television each evening). However, because of the influences late-night programming and cable can exert on the medium as a whole, the PTC does monitor shows airing in other time slots, and on expanded basic cable channels.

Parents often complain that when objectionable programming comes into the home via the widely accessible venues of broadcast television and expanded basic cable, it is often virtually unavoidable and puts a tremendous burden on them to monitor their children's viewing 24/7 especially now when family programming is scarce.

<http://www.parentstv.org/PTC/faqs/main.asp#What%20is%20the%20PTCs%20mission>

APPENDIX B

PTC: Summary of ‘Skins’

PTC Summary:

Skins

MTV

Drama

Mondays, 10:00 p.m. ET

Production Companies: Company Pictures, Entertainment One

Producers: Derek Harvie, Bryan Elsley

Creators: Bryan Elsley, Jamie Brittain

MTV’s Skins is an American remake of the controversial British series of the same name that exposes the supposed hidden life of teenagers. The leader of the group is Tony, an over-confident, crafty alpha-male who acts as the puppet-master of various schemes. In the first episode, Tony is determined to help his hapless, geeky friend Stanley lose his virginity. He enlists others around him to aid the cause including Tony’s sexpot girlfriend Shelley, lesbian Tea, “wild man” Chris, troubled basket case Cadie, studious good girl Daisy, and libidinous Muslim Abbud.

In both the British and American versions of Skins, the kids on the show engage in a host of risky behaviors such as unmitigated drug and alcohol abuse, casual sex, drug dealing, and emotional sabotage. Sex on the show is rampant, which is especially troubling since

all of the actors in the cast are younger than 18 years old. No other show on television today depicts teen sexuality as frankly as this one. So far the show has already featured a lesbian love scene, several instances of nudity, a pair of masturbation scenes, and pedophilic behavior. The graphic sexuality on the show is grossly inappropriate for the young demographic the show targets. Language is consistently vulgar. F-words are frequently bleeped; other profanity, including the s-word, is unbleeped. The words “bitch,” “damn,” and “bastard” appear in virtually every episode. Actual violence thus far has been limited to occasional fistfights, but Stanley has been threatened with castration by a drug dealer, and other threats of violence have occurred.

Skins is rated TV-MA, but has been heavily marketed to teen viewers.

Skins is not recommend for viewers under age 18.

Sex: Red

Violence: Yellow

Language: Red

Overall: Red

APPENDIX C

PTC Press Release: January 20, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 20, 2011

PTC Calls on Feds to Investigate “Skins” on MTV for Child Pornography and Exploitation

LOS ANGELES (January 20, 2011) – The Parents Television Council TM today called on the chairmen of the U.S. Senate and House Judiciary Committees and the Department of Justice to immediately open an investigation regarding child pornography and exploitation on MTV’s “Skins.” The New York Times reported today that the network itself is concerned about violating child pornography laws. In addition to the sexual content on the show involving cast members as young as 15, PTC counted 42 depictions and references to drugs and alcohol in the premiere episode. The run-time was only 41 minutes excluding commercial breaks.

The following are excerpts from the letter that PTC President Tim Winter sent Committee Chairmen Patrick Leahy and Lamar Smith. The rest of the Judiciary Committee members, Attorney General Eric Holder and Federal Communications Committee Chairman Julius Genachowski were also sent copies of the letter.

“On January 17, the Viacom-owned cable network MTV aired a teenager-based drama, ‘Skins.’ The episode included all manner of foul language, illegal drug use, illegal activity as well as thoroughly pervasive sexual content. Moreover, future episodes promise much more of the same.

“While that alone is cause enough for concern among parents and families around the country, new information has come to light that is even more disturbing. The New York Times has reported this morning that Viacom executives met yesterday to discuss whether the show might violate federal law regarding the sexual depiction and presentation of minors and has compelled the producers of the show to make certain changes.

“However, many of the actors appearing in the show are below the age of 18. It is clear that Viacom has knowingly produced material that may well be in violation of any or all of the following federal statutes:

“18 U.S.C. § 1466A (2008) Obscene Visual Representations of the Sexual Abuse of Children

18 U.S.C. § 2251 (2008) Sexual Exploitation of Children

18 U.S.C. § 2252 (2008) Relating to Material Involving the Sexual Exploitation of Minors

18 U.S.C. § 2252A (2008) Relating to Material Constituting or Containing Child Pornography

“Since it is not necessary for Viacom or MTV to distribute the material in order to be in violation of the law, we call upon your committees to immediately investigate Viacom and MTV for the production of this material. Furthermore, we urge you in the strongest possible terms to compel the Attorney General to mount an investigation by the Department of Justice into whether the production of ‘Skins’ has violated federal law meant to protect minors from exploitation.

“On behalf of our 1.3 million members, I eagerly await your reply.”

To speak with a representative from the Parents Television Council, please contact Megan Franko at (703) 859-5054 or Liz Krieger at (703) 683-5004 ext. 120.

APPENDIX D

PTC Press Release: January 21, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 21, 2011

PTC Applauds Taco Bell for Pulling Ads from MTV's Racy "Skins"

PTC also Praises General Motors

LOS ANGELES (January 21, 2010) – The Parents Television Council TM joined with families and parents to thank Taco Bell for pulling advertisements from MTV's new show, "Skins." Following a PTC take action alert asking members to contact Taco Bell about sponsoring the program, the company asserted that the racy content was not in line with its brand.

The PTC also praised General Motors for its swift response after our members contacted GM about two Chevy Volt advertisements which aired during "Skins."

"PTC applauds Taco Bell for pulling its ad dollars away from the extremely graphic content on MTV's 'Skins.' We express our thanks on behalf of countless families, especially those who contacted Taco Bell directly with their concerns," PTC President Tim Winter said.

“PTC also thanks General Motors for swiftly responding to PTC members’ concerns about Chevy Volt advertisements. GM told PTC that ‘Skins’ was on its ‘do not buy’ list on MTV, and that MTV admitted placing the Chevy commercial on ‘Skins’ in error. GM also stated that MTV had apologized for its error.

“Every single advertiser who sponsored the premiere episode of ‘Skins’ is not only endorsing, but glorifying teen drug and alcohol abuse, not to mention a plethora of baseless sexual content. The following companies and brand names can rest assured that they will be hearing from PTC about their decision to sponsor the program: Schick Hydro, H&R Block, L’Oreal, Subway, Foot Locker, Orbit chewing gum and Extra chewing gum. We sincerely hope these advertisers will agree that the content in ‘Skins’ is harmful to their corporate image,” Winter concluded.

To speak with a representative from the Parents Television Council, please contact Megan Franko at (703) 859-5054 or Liz Krieger at (703) 683-5004 ext. 120.

APPENDIX E

PTC Press Release: January 22, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 22, 2011

PTC Thanks Wrigley for Suspending “Skins” Ads

LOS ANGELES (January 22, 2010) – The Parents Television Council™ offered its thanks to Wrigley for its decision to discontinue advertising on MTV’s “Skins.” The Los Angeles Times reported via Show Tracker that that the company suspended “Skins” advertisements to avoid endorsing content that could offend consumers. Advertisements for Extra and Orbit chewing gum appeared on the premiere episode.

“We applaud Wrigley for making the responsible decision to separate its brand from a show that glorifies teen sex, teen drug use and teen alcohol abuse. At the end of the day, it is the flow of advertising dollars – or lack thereof – that decides which programs are delivered into the nation’s living rooms, and we thank Wrigley for making a socially responsible decision,” said PTC President Tim Winter.

“Today, our members began contacting Subway asking them to defend sponsoring the baseless content on ‘Skins’ that is being marketed directly to children. We will also be contacting Schick Hydro, H&R Block, L’Oreal, and Foot Locker to ask them to join

Wrigley, Taco Bell and General Motors in halting their sponsorship of such extreme content,” Winter concluded.

To speak with a representative from the Parents Television Council, please contact Megan Franko at (703) 859-5054 or Liz Krieger at (703) 683-5004 ext. 120.

APPENDIX F

PTC Press Release: January 23, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 23, 2011

PTC Tips Its Hat to H&R Block for Bowing Out of “Skins”

LOS ANGELES (January 23, 2010) – The Parents Television Council TM thanked H&R Block for taking steps to ensure that no future advertisements will air on MTV’s new scripted series “Skins.” The company told TMZ the show does not fit their brand and the ad in the premiere episode ran by mistake.

“On behalf of parents and families across America, we extend our thanks to H&R Block for moving swiftly to ensure that no future advertisements air on a show that includes teen alcohol or teen drug references more than once per minute of airtime,” said PTC President Tim Winter.

“We’re beginning to wonder which companies actually wanted to sponsor ‘Skins’ after hearing from both H&R Block and General Motors that neither intended to advertise on the program. MTV’s PR department has been busy touting their ‘ongoing dialogue’ with their sponsors, but are there other advertisers who were unwitting participants in the program?”

“We will continue to monitor every broadcast and every rebroadcast of ‘Skins’ so that we can inform the public which corporations are underwriting underage teen sex, underage teen drug use and underage teen alcohol use,” Winter concluded.

To date, H&R Block, Wrigley, General Motors, and Taco Bell have all decided they will no longer be sponsoring the program. PTC members and other concerned citizens are currently contacting Subway regarding their sponsorship of the program via email messages and hand delivered letters to local franchises.

To speak with a representative from the Parents Television Council, please contact Megan Franko at (703) 859-5054 or Liz Krieger at (703) 683-5004 ext. 120.

APPENDIX G

PTC Press Release: January 25, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 25, 2011

PTC Commends Advertisers Absent from Second “Skins” Episode
Urges Red Bull and Zeno Hot Spot to Steer Clear of the Dangerous Content

LOS ANGELES (January 25, 2010) – The Parents Television Council TM thanked Foot Locker, L’Oreal , Schick, and Subway for halting their sponsorship of the extreme content on “Skins” after they did not appear on the second episode of the show. None of the eight sponsors PTC called out for advertising during the premiere of “Skins” appeared in the second airing of the program.

“ We extend our thanks to Foot Locker, L’Oreal , Schick, and Subway for heeding our call to cease underwriting the dangerous content on MTV’s ‘Skins.’ Of the eight advertisers we called out publicly after the premiere, none of them appeared in the second episode. Our sincere hope is that no advertiser would willingly sponsor a program that glorifies teen drug and alcohol abuse, in addition to sexual content involving minors that could actually be illegal,” said PTC President Tim Winter.

“The advertiser line-up for the second episode mostly contained promos for other MTV and Viacom programming along with movies that carried either R or PG-13 ratings. However, our members and other concerned parents will not stop contacting companies that endorse underage alcohol and drug abuse . Red Bull and Zeno Hot Spot are the next two that will be asked to defend their sponsorship of the graphic content on ‘Skins,’” Winter concluded.

To speak with a representative from the Parents Television Council, please contact Megan Franko at (703) 859-5054 or Liz Krieger at (703) 683-5004 ext. 120.

APPENDIX H

PTC Press Release: February 2, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 2, 2011

PTC Members Contacting State Attorneys General,

Urging Investigation of "Skins"

LOS ANGELES (February 2, 2011) – Today, the Parents Television Council™ asked its members and other concerned citizens to begin contacting their state attorneys general, urging them to investigate "Skins" on MTV. The New York Times reported that MTV executives were concerned they may have violated national child pornography laws in the filming of the show, particularly during the third episode which aired this week.

PTC is now calling on state attorneys general to investigate whether local cable and satellite providers have violated state and local laws relating to child pornography and exploitation by distributing the content. PTC has already called on U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and the House and Senate Judiciary committees to launch a full investigation.

"It is unfortunate that we have reached the point of having to call for a criminal investigation into the production and distribution of an MTV show depicting minors in sexual situations. As if the blatant teen drug and alcohol abuse on 'Skins' isn't enough, the fact that MTV allegedly considered whether its program might have violated child

pornography laws – and then went ahead and aired it anyway – is beyond repulsive,” said PTC President Tim Winter.

“We urge state attorneys general to investigate whether local cable and satellite providers have violated the law by distributing this content. Our hope is that no cable or satellite provider would willingly distribute content that might be illegal,” Winter concluded.

To speak with a representative from the Parents Television Council, please contact Megan Franko at (703) 859-5054 or Liz Krieger at (703) 683-5004 ext. 120.

APPENDIX I

PTC Press Release: June 10, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 10, 2011

MTV's 'Skins' Canceled: PTC Marks End of 'Most Dangerous' TV Show for Kids

LOS ANGELES (June 10, 2011) – The Parents Television Council® marked the end of MTV's "Skins" following the network announcement that it was canceling the program after just one season.

"MTV's decision to put 'Skins' on the air was a programming failure of cataclysmic proportions. The network marketed the show to kids and then lied. The producers admitted to delivering kids to advertisers and then lied about their intentions. Advertisers openly supported the show until they were called out for underwriting some of the most graphic portrayals of teen sex and glamorized drug and alcohol abuse that we have ever seen on television," said PTC President Tim Winter.

Based on MTV's direct marketing of "Skins" to young viewers even before the premiere, PTC called the program "the most dangerous television show for children that we have ever seen." As the season began, PTC urged the U.S. Senate and House Judiciary Committees, the Department of Justice and state attorneys general to open an investigation regarding child pornography and exploitation. PTC also orchestrated a

research and advocacy campaign to call out each advertiser that appeared on the show, and applauded the numerous companies that agreed the content did not resonate with their corporate image.

“Season one of ‘Skins’ was so full of explicit content, viewers were treated to some form of sex, violence, drugs, alcohol, or profanity once every 22 seconds of air time. Graphic sexual content was the most pervasive, followed by drug-related references and depictions. It took 53 episodes of broadcast programming to find the equivalent amount of drug content that aired in only eight ‘Skins’ episodes,” said Winter.

“The shocking content was trumped only by the fact that the program featured teenage actors and was marketed to teenage children. We are grateful to every member of the public who helped us drive an economic stake through the graphic content on the program, the likes of which never deserves to see the light of day again,” Winter concluded.

To speak with a representative from the Parents Television Council, please contact Megan Franko at (703) 859-5054 or Liz Krieger at (703) 683-5004 ext. 120.

APPENDIX J

New York Times Article

January 19, 2011

A Racy Show With Teenagers Steps Back From a Boundary

By BRIAN STELTER

MTV executives have a new hit drama on their hands, featuring the sexual and drug-fueled exploits of misfit teenagers. They also have something else — a fear that coming episodes of the show may break the law.

In recent days, executives at the cable channel became concerned that some scenes from the provocative new show “Skins” may violate federal child pornography statutes.

The executives ordered the producers to make changes to tone down some of the most explicit content.

They are particularly concerned about the third episode of the series, which is to be broadcast Jan. 31. In an early version, a naked 17-year-old actor is shown from behind as he runs down a street. The actor, Jesse Carere, plays Chris, a high school student whose erection — assisted by erectile dysfunction pills — is a punch line throughout the episode.

The planned changes indicate that MTV, which has been pushing the envelope for decades, may be concerned that it pushed too far this time.

“Skins” is a calculated risk by MTV which is eager to get into the scripted programming business. The channel, a unit of Viacom, has long tested American standards for sexuality and obscenity on television with shows like “The Real World” and “Jersey Shore.”

Those reality shows have generally involved adults, but for “Skins,” the producers purposefully cast actors ages 15 to 19, most of whom had never acted before.

MTV’s president and other executives declined interview requests on Wednesday. An MTV spokeswoman, Jeannie Kedas, insisted that the future episodes of “Skins” were still works in progress. She would not confirm that MTV executives were fearful of running afoul of child pornography laws.

“ ‘Skins’ is a show that addresses real-world issues confronting teens in a frank way,” she said in a statement. “We review all of our shows and work with all of our producers on an ongoing basis to ensure our shows comply with laws and community standards. We are confident that the episodes of ‘Skins’ will not only comply with all applicable legal requirements, but also with our responsibilities to our viewers.”

Child pornography is defined by the United States as any visual depiction of a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct. In some cases, “a picture of a naked child may

constitute illegal child pornography if it is sufficiently sexually suggestive,” according to the Justice Department’s legal guidance. Anyone younger than 18 is considered to be a minor.

The youngest cast member on “Skins” is 15.

“Skins” is an import from Britain, a country that has historically displayed a higher tolerance for TV eroticism than the United States. The episodes for MTV, including the third one, which was shared with TV critics, are virtually identical to the source material.

The remade episodes, like the ones in Britain, included simulated masturbation, implied sexual assault, and teenagers disrobing and getting into bed together.

With ads that feature groups of barely clothed teenagers, “Skins” is surely one of the most sexually charged programs that MTV has featured. Before it even had its premiere, the Parents Television Council, a TV watchdog group, labeled “Skins” the “most dangerous program that has ever been foisted on your children.” The group objected to the gratuitous scenes of drug and alcohol use, violence and sexual acts.

Of course, those scenes may be what attract young viewers in the first place. Jessica Bennett, a senior writer for Newsweek, wrote last week, “ ‘Skins’ may be the most realistic show on television.”

The show is off to a running start. It attracted 3.3 million to its premiere on Monday night and set a new first-episode record for the channel among viewers ages 12 to 34.

Episodes of “Skins” are rated TV-MA, indicating that the content may be unsuitable for viewers younger than 17. MTV states in news releases that it is “specifically designed to be viewed by adults.” However, many of MTV’s viewers are in middle and high school. According to the Nielsen Company, the first episode drew 1.2 million people younger than 18.

MTV noted that the episodes were being shown only at or after 10 p.m. Eastern, and said in the statement, “We also have taken numerous steps to alert viewers to the strong subject matter so that they can choose for themselves whether it is appropriate.”

It is unclear when MTV first realized that the show may be vulnerable to child pornography charges. On Tuesday, a flurry of meetings took place at the network’s headquarters in New York, according to an executive who attended some of the meetings and spoke only on the condition of anonymity. In one of the meetings, the executives wondered aloud who could possibly face criminal prosecution and jail time if the episodes were broadcast without changes.

Days earlier, MTV held a premiere party for the series in Manhattan. Ensconced there in the V.I.P. perch, the actors huddled around one another and stared in awe at the youthful party that was under way — while unable to partake in the free alcohol that was flowing

in the 21-and-older area. By midnight, several of the actors appeared to have headed home with their parents.

Referring to the largely unknown actors, Bryan Elsley, an executive producer of “Skins,” said in a letter to critics last month, “They’re making the characters their own and demanding that their voices be heard.”

Mr. Elsley and his producing partners did not respond to interview requests on Wednesday, but MTV executives were known to be worried about how the producers would react to the planned changes. The channel intends for the editing to obscure some of the sexual content in the third episode and others.

There are, of course, innumerable examples of youthful sexuality being packaged by the media. Amy M. Adler, a professor of law at New York University who specializes in free speech, art and pornography, pointed to the teenage singer Miley Cyrus’s revealing photo shoots and the CW network’s use of condemnations by the Parents Television Council of the risqué drama “Gossip Girl” to promote the show.

“There are times when I look at mainstream culture and think it is skirting up against the edge of child pornography law,” she said

APPENDIX K

MSNBC News Article

Racy MTV show 'Skins' is losing an advertiser

Hollywood Reporter

1/20/2011 5:26:51 PM ET

Taco Bell has pulled its ads off "Skins" after the Parents Television Council urged a boycott.

Spokesperson Rob Poetsch tells The Hollywood Reporter, "We advertise on a variety of MTV programs that reach our core demographic of 18 to 34 year olds, which included the premiere episode of 'Skins.' "

"Upon further review, we've decided that the show is not a fit for our brand and have moved our advertising to other MTV programming," he added.

One day after it was reported Viacom executives ordered producers to tone down its racy teen drama, the PTC also announced it's urging the Department of Justice and U.S. Senate and House Judiciary Committees to open an investigation.

"In addition to the sexual content on the show involving cast members as young as 15, PTC counted 42 depictions and references to drugs and alcohol in the premiere episode," the group wrote in a letter to the government organizations.

"It is clear that Viacom has knowingly produced material that may well be in violation of [several anti-child pornography laws]," added the PTC, which earlier called the show "the most dangerous program ever for children."

The New York Times reported that a number of executives met on Tuesday over concerns the show could violate pornography laws.

While MTV did not confirm that, a rep for the network said, "Skins is a show that addresses real-world issues confronting teens in a frank way. We review all of our shows and work with all of our producers on an ongoing basis to ensure our shows comply with laws and community standards. We are confident that the episodes of 'Skins' will not only comply with all applicable legal requirements, but also with our responsibilities to our viewers.

APPENDIX L

Salon.Com Article

MTV's "Skins": The Ethics of Profiting from Teen Sexuality

JANUARY 24, 2011 2:40PM

By Chris MacDonald

There's been a lot of chatter in the last few days about MTV's teensploitation show, "Skins." Of course, one theory says that that's just what MTV has been hoping for — a lot of free advertizing.

I'm quoted giving a business-ethics perspective on the show in this story, by the NYT's David Carr: "A Naked Calculation Gone Bad."

What if one day you went to work and there was a meeting to discuss whether the project you were working on crossed the line into child pornography? You'd probably think you had ended up in the wrong room.

And you'd be right.

Last week, my colleague Brian Stelter reported that on Tuesday, the day after the pilot episode of "Skins" was shown on MTV, executives at the cable channel were frantically

meeting to discuss whether the salacious teenage drama starring actors as young as 15 might violate federal child pornography statutes.

Since I'm quoted in that story, I'll just cut to my own conclusion:

"Even if you decide that this show is not out-and-out evil and that the show is legal from a technical perspective, that doesn't really eliminate the significant social and ethical issues it raises," said Chris MacDonald, a visiting scholar at the University of Toronto's Clarkson Center for Business Ethics and author of the Business Ethics Blog. "Teenagers are both sexual beings and highly impressionable, and because of that, they're vulnerable to just these kinds of messages. You have to wonder if there isn't a better way to make a living."

I wouldn't bet one way or the other on how this will turn out — in particular on whether pressure from advocacy groups and advertisers will convince MTV to can the show. If it does, then this controversy turns into a nice example of how just the wrong kind of corporate culture can produce bad results. Consider: there are an awful lot of people involved in conceiving and producing, and airing a TV drama. In order for *Skins* to make it to air, a lot of people had to spend months and months going with the flow, basically saying to themselves and each other "Yes, it is a really good idea to show teens this way, to use teen actors this way, and to market this kind of show to teens." Hundreds of people involved in the production must have either thought it was a good idea, or thought otherwise but decided they couldn't speak up. If this turns out badly, MTV will have

provided yet another example of how things can go badly when employees aren't encouraged and empowered to speak up and to voice dissent.

APPENDIX M

ABC News Article

Taco Bell Pulls Ads From MTV's 'Skins' Amid Call for Congressional, Justice Inquiries

By MARY PFLUM, SARAH KUNIN and AMANDA VANALLEN

Jan. 21, 2011 —

MTV's new hit show "Skins" is getting tons of attention for its vivid depiction of teen sex and drug use. The show premiered Monday night before three million viewers.

But now it's getting a heavy dose of criticism, with complaints that MTV has gone too far.

"It's a show about teenagers and it's created for teenagers and I think it goes pretty far," family therapist Terry Real said on "Good Morning America."

"I think you have to raise kids to be what I call media literate and sexually literate. It's [MTV'S "Skins"] kind of like peer pressure on steroids," Real added.

MTV issued a written statement, saying the network has taken all of the necessary steps to ensure they are not breaking any rules.

"We are confident that the episodes of 'Skins' will not only comply with all applicable legal requirements, but also with our responsibilities to our viewers. We also have taken numerous steps to alert viewers to the strong subject matter so that they can choose for themselves whether it is appropriate."

Although MTV defends the legality of the controversial show, TV Guide business editor Stephen Battaglio believes the network may back off if sponsors back away.

"There have been reports that MTV is going to tone the show down," he said. "If there's any pressure that MTV is going to bow to, it would be to advertisers."

That pressure is already beginning to mount. At least one advertiser, Taco Bell, announced it is pulling its commercials from future shows. Taco Bell is not the only organization up in arms about the new show. The Parents Television Council called on the chairmen of the U.S. Senate and House Judiciary committees and the Department of Justice to open investigations about what the PTC alleges is child pornography on "Skins" involving actors as young as 15.

In addition to the claims of pornography claims, PTC chairman Tim Winter said in a letter to the committee chairs that the group also wants an investigation into allegations of excessive references to drugs and alcohol on the program. The PTC has 1.3 million members.

Real, the family therapist, said MTV made a big deal about airing the show late, at 10 p.m., but he thinks most teens are still watching. He is concerned that some teenagers believe this show is depicting reality.

"I think that it is terribly important that we let our kids know that this is in fact not the norm," he said.

Real has different concerns for boys than girls who are watching "Skins."

"The concern for the boys is that the idea here is very clearly that even the young boys 14, 15, 16 are up for sex anywhere, anytime with anyone," Real said. "I think that's a lot of pressure for our sons to have to deal with."

He believes the pressure facing teenage boys is unrealistic, but he is more concerned with the obstacles facing young girls.

"The girls concern me even more because if you look at the kind of sexuality that's portrayed its often in fact not mutual, it's about girls feeling they need to service boys in order to keep them," Real said. "I think this a direct, in some ways, backlash to the empowerment of girls. I think we need to stand up to it and have our daughters stand up to it and do what they feel comfortable with."

Real is not the only person concerned about this new show. Some critics even believe that MTV might be breaking the law by airing "Skins" every week.

Among the concerns are the ages of some of the actors. Several "Skins" cast members are as young as 15 years old. Their roles in upcoming episodes, which include nudity, have prompted some to wonder whether MTV is doing a delicate dance around child pornography issues.

"The bar keeps getting higher for what gets provocative on televisions," said TV Guide's Battaglio. "This time they decided to take a chance on it."

While the controversy surrounding "Skins" may be new, scandals surrounding dramas written and targeted for teens is not. "Skins" joins a growing list of television shows in recent years that have gotten teens talking - and parents worried.

Just last year, "Gossip Girl," the CW series about Manhattan teens, caused a scandal when three of its characters took part in three-way sex.

But some high school students say they prefer the kind of drama that's portrayed on "Skins." They say it's true-to-life whether parents like it or not.

"That's just really how life is except not to their extremes," one teen told ABC News.

"You can't say I don't want them to watch this because then they'll do it. She might already be doing that. You can't say it's all television," another teen added.

APPENDIX N

New York Daily News Article

'Skins' is not being canceled by MTV, despite ratings drop from 3.3 to 1.6 million:

network rep

BY SORAYA ROBERTS

DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Wednesday, January 26, 2011

"Skins" may have taken a ratings dive, but that doesn't mean the show is packing it in, the Daily News has exclusively learned.

After losing six advertisers -- Taco Bell, GM, Schick, Subway, H&R Block and Wrigley -- in the past couple of weeks, the MTV series' ratings dropped from 3.3 million viewers in its debut to 1.6 million viewers for its second episode, which aired Monday night.

A rep for MTV has denied a report by Fox News that the network is canceling the show in light of these numbers, releasing a statement to the Daily News stating that MTV "stands by the U.S. adaptation of 'Skins' and the vision of its creator Bryan Elsley."

"'Skins' has earned the loyalty of fans across the globe for its thoughtful and honest portrayal of teen life today," the network said. "An internationally acclaimed scripted drama, the show has been honored with a long list of prestigious awards."

The second episode ratings were in line with competitive scripted shows across cable and network TV. Ratings for the show's premiere were also inflated by the lead in of "Jersey Shore," which was absent this week.

According to deadline.com, the numbers actually exceeded internal projections ratings by MTV.

"Skins" has been stirring up controversy in the past few weeks following the Parents Television Council's claim that it is "the most dangerous TV show" for kids and that many of its scenes -- played by real teens, some as young as 15 -- are grounds for child pornography charges.

The PTC has gone so far as to ask the government to investigate the show.

"Skins" co-creator Bryan Elsley -- the man behind the original UK series that premiered in 2007 -- recently responded to the controversy surrounding his show.

"In the UK, viewers and commentators very quickly realized that although there are some sensational aspects to the show, 'Skins' is actually a very serious attempt to get to the roots of young people's lives," he wrote in a Huffington Post blog. "Sometimes that truth can be a little painful to adults and parents."

"Skins" airs Mondays at 10 p.m. on MTV.

APPENDIX O

Hollywoodreporter.com Article

EXCLUSIVE: Taco Bell Pulls Ads From MTV's 'Skins' Over Racy Content

1:30 PM PST 1/20/2011 by Lindsay Powers

"We've decided that the show is not a fit for our brand and have moved our advertising to other MTV programming," a rep tells THR.

Taco Bell has pulled its ads off Skins after the Parents Television Council urged people to contact the company to protest.

Spokesperson Rob Poetsch tells The Hollywood Reporter, "We advertise on a variety of MTV programs that reach our core demographic of 18 to 34 year olds, which included the premiere episode of Skins."

"Upon further review, we've decided that the show is not a fit for our brand and have moved our advertising to other MTV programming," he added.

One day after it was reported Viacom executives ordered producers to tone down its racy teen drama, the PTC also announced it's asking the Department of Justice and U.S. Senate and House Judiciary Committees to open an investigation.

"In addition to the sexual content on the show involving cast members as young as 15, PTC counted 42 depictions and references to drugs and alcohol in the premiere episode," the group wrote in a letter to the government organizations.

"It is clear that Viacom has knowingly produced material that may well be in violation of [several anti-child pornography laws]," added the PTC, which earlier called the show "the most dangerous program ever for children."

The New York Times reported that a number of executives met on Tuesday over concerns the show could violate pornography laws.

While MTV did not confirm that, a rep for the network said, "Skins is a show that addresses real-world issues confronting teens in a frank way. We review all of our shows and work with all of our producers on an ongoing basis to ensure our shows comply with laws and community standards. We are confident that the episodes of Skins will not only comply with all applicable legal requirements, but also with our responsibilities to our viewers."

Taco Bell isn't the first major food chain to pull out of a controversial MTV show.

Domino's Pizza yanked its ad spots from Jersey Shore in 2009.

APPENDIX P

Deadline.com Article

Now Subway Pulls Ads From 'Skins'; Joins H&R Block, Wrigley, GM & Taco Bell

By NELLIE ANDREEVA

Monday January 24, 2011 @ 10:45am PST

UPDATE, MONDAY: The fast-food restaurant chain, which on Saturday became PTC's new main target, has pulled its ads from MTV's *Skins*.

UPDATE, SATURDAY: Today, the Parents Television Council praised another advertiser, Wrigley, for suspending advertisements on MTV's *Skins*. Another company, H&R Block, also has asked that its MTV ads don't run on *Skins*. PTC is still going after other advertisers for endorsing a program with such "extreme" content. Just this morning, PTC activists began contacting Subway directly.

FRIDAY 3:15 PM: General Motors has joined Taco Bell in pulling advertising from MTV's racy drama series *Skins*, according to the Parents Television Council, which has been leading the crusade against the show that features suggestive or explicit content with underage actors.

Ads for GM's Chevy Volt aired during the premiere of *Skins* on Monday. But GM has told PTC that *Skins* was on its 'do not buy' list on MTV, that the commercials had aired

in error and that the company has no intention of advertising on the show. “Every single advertiser who sponsored the premiere episode of *Skins* is not only endorsing, but glorifying teen drug and alcohol abuse, not to mention a plethora of baseless sexual content,” PTC said in a statement. It also listed the sponsors for *Skins*, urging them to withdraw their support for the show: Schick Hydro, H&R Block, L’Oreal, Subway, Foot Locker, Orbit chewing gum and Extra chewing gum. The TV watchdog yesterday called on the U.S. Senate and House Judiciary Committees and the Department of Justice to open an investigation for possible child pornography and exploitation on the show, because of the ages of its cast, 15-19.

APPENDIX Q

Huffington Post Article: 'I Just Want My Pants Back'

MTV's 'I Just Want My Pants Back' Becomes New Target For PTC

Posted: 02/14/2012 9:50 am

React

The Parents Television Council is going after MTV once again, and this time for their new scripted series "I Just Want My Pants Back," based off David J. Rosen's novel off the same name.

"Pants Back" is a semi-raunchy relationship comedy about young post-graduates in their twenties, living in Brooklyn, NY. According to the PTC, it's going after the show's sponsors because MTV is targeting 12-year-old children with the show's racy content.

"Once again MTV is taking HBO-style content and marketing it to a Nickelodeon-age audience," said PTC president Tim Winter, as reported by EW.com. "The network programming executive is on the record saying 12-year-olds are in his crosshairs. And the TV-14 content rating is intentionally misleading for parents and for advertisers. The Parents Television Council will not sit silently and allow this affront to go unchallenged."

But that's not all. Winter then goes on to warn parents -- and MTV's advertisers -- of the kind of materiel "Pants Back" is exposing to children.

"All of MTV's advertisers, including Dr. Pepper, T-Mobile and Toyota, will be asked if foursomes and a woman who tells her sexual partner to 'stick a finger in my a--' are an accurate reflection of their hard-earned corporate brands," Winter said. "Parents need to be warned about MTV's stated intention to target children as young as 12 with this explicit material."

While, MTV's target demo is indeed 12 to 34, not every MTV show is aimed toward the younger end of the network's demo. Not to mention that "Pants Back" airs at 11 p.m. EST on Thursdays, after the network's other controversial show, "Jersey Shore." Edited episodes of "Pants Back" do re-air during the day, but the daytime re-airs have been edited to take the more racy content out.

Last season, the PTC went after MTV's ill-fated remake of the UK's "Skins," which had similar raunchy content and dialogue. That specific program, however, was about high school-aged teenagers, and the PTC had a better argument for it's sponsors.

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Jenna L. Hoops was born in Portland, Maine on February 18, 1990. She was raised in Scarborough, Maine and graduated from Scarborough High School in 2008. She attended the University of Maine, majoring in mass communication. Jenna is a member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars and Lambda Pi Eta Honor Society. She also was the 2012 recipient of the Outstanding Graduating Senior award for Mass Communication. After graduation Jenna plans on beginning her career in the communications field.